



STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

PROJECT :: **CRAIG – MAIN COMPLETE STREETS** SCHENECTADY, NEW YORK

MEETING DATE & TIME :: May 02, 2019 6:30 PM

MEETING LOCATION :: Electric City Barn, Craig Street Schenectady, NY

In Attendance (Approximately 35, with 28 signing in):

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Meeting Summary of Discussion

- **Kristin Diotte** introduced the project, clarified the study area and introduced the Mayor. She clarified that the funding source for the study is CDTC and introduced Jacob. How do we make Craig/Main more bikeable, walkable and drivable safely to foster quality development? People who live here know best.
- **Mayor McCarthy** welcomed people and reaffirmed the importance of neighborhood involvement to help the City determine next steps. City is applying for funding.
- **Mary Moore Wallinger** presented the introductory slides, reviewed goals, and reviewed the study area, discussed opportunities and constraints. She highlighted that the turnout and support for the Bike Fest played a large role in helping to solicit funding for this study and identifying the corridor as an important neighborhood project.
- **Kim Case and Mary Moore** reviewed complete streets as a design approach to improve Craig-Main corridor so that it is a balanced and safe experience for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. Kim reviewed challenges, opportunities, and tradeoffs including the DOT bridge, varying road widths, on-street parking, vacant parcels, etc. Kristin commented on the fact that different people will have different priorities, for example, if you have a car, on-street parking may be important to you, while people who do not own cars may be more concerned with where transit stops are or would prefer wider sidewalks with less parking. Discussed existing conditions, tradeoffs, technical studies, where we are in the process.
- **Johan Matthews** discussed some of the community engagement activities. Welcomed people to add to the list of stakeholders, survey, curbside conversations to uncover community insight to inform the design. It's an "insurance policy" to make sure you get what you feel is in the best interest of the neighborhood. Focusing on kids makes sure we are planning for the future of the community, not replacing the community. Described the Great Schenectady Treasure Hunt and upcoming workshop with the Working Group on Girls. Uncovered insights: what route do you take? What routes do you choose so that you feel safer? Do you feel connected to the community?
- **Mary Moore** discussed the launch party and asked how we can engage the community and encourage participation?
 - Reach out to the people everybody knows.
 - Develop a "host team" to reach out to their networks.
 - Mary Moore welcomed ideas for people to add to the SAC.
 - Provide food!
 - Mont Pleasant School students -can go to the district website and ask the district to approve sending material
 - Teen night on May 11th
 - Some kind of reward for the kids – gift card? Sends message that their input has actual "value".
 - Mental Health Fair at Mont Pleasant Middle School on Monday
 - Are there local social media sources that we could piggy back with? Consider reaching out to the high school.
 - Planned Parenthood also has groups at the high school
 - Get to the pastors
 - Put flyers at apartment complexes
 - What is the study area? Decided not to start with a boundary? See who is participating and who is moving through the area.

- Send flyers by direct mail.
- Steinmetz career center/culinary arts program
- Male achievers' program

Community Input

Arts and Culture – how can it add to the community

- Art center – adding sculpture and murals across the street from the center – adding green space
- C.R.E.A.T.E. Studio is planning some murals
- Something for traffic calming.
- 3D painting in the crosswalk ... variety of ways to use painting for traffic calming
- Bridge half way through makes this a main highway. Craig is so wide and could be narrowed if sidewalks were good. The street has potholes and the sidewalks are in poor condition. People can't teach their kids to ride a bike except in the road. Cars zig and zag at the last minute to miss potholes and drive unpredictably and are not looking out for kids.
- Wiley Street is dark – poorly lit.
- What if trash receptacles were art?
- Where does art fall in the priority list? Are sidewalks, streets and lighting more important? Art becomes a higher priority if it contributes to safety and a sense of security.
- Photo of green space between Education Drive and the Craig Street bridge was in the PPT should be an art park space. Less than 5 blocks from school.
- Child thought bridge was scary because you were so high in the air with fast traffic underneath
- Art needs to be updated – follow trends kids are interested in.
- Sidewalk painting
- Flags (banners on lights) that mean something to the neighborhood. Give people a feeling of the 21st century. That they are moving into a luxurious place.
- Sidewalk that are thermal?
- Artistic Lamp Posts – can we have festive lights?
- Nice neighborhoods - will see islands of flowers, green medians...
- Mary Moore talked about trees contributing to keeping the neighborhood cool during the summer, improving air quality, and calming traffic.
- Consider flowering trees. Retree Schenectady is a good partner.

Erin - Red Door Beauty Studio - Business Development

- What do you buy at the corner store? Chips, food that is out of date. No greens, no fruits, or meats. Overpriced daily goods (ex: laundry detergent)
- Where do you go to shop? Without a car, have to go to multiple places especially if you are looking for sales.
- Need a grocery store, co-op
- Would like veggie mobile? Could it come more often? People are sometimes not prepared to buy when it shows up
- Family Dollar agreed to do the Healthy Convenience Stores Initiative through Capital Roots but did not do it. Can it be required?
- Someone proposed a farmer's market in the neighborhood.

- Large base of nonprofits. Should locally source their food. They go to the food pantry. Money comes through the community but does not stay in the community. Incentives to get people to eat in the restaurants.
- Corner Albany and Hewlett - What businesses would you like to see?
- Need to encourage stores that will sell laundry detergent, milk, bread...
- People are afraid not just of falling on sidewalks but of being hurt by the people who are hanging out.
- Businesses that are in operation need help with minor repairs – story of business with leaky roof.
- Transportation is a barrier. There are not enough buses and they are not scheduled frequently enough. People leave really early and run out of work to catch the bus. Often people will need to take the bus as well as walk far to finally get to destination due to bus route limitations. Limits job options.
- Need to reach agreement with the whole community. Elderly people don't use social media. Are not doing enough to reach them.
- We need to solve our own problems. We are the most self-reliant people there are. We need to solve our own problems and not talk about who we are dependent upon. We need to fix our own problems.
- What resources exist to support people who want to support businesses in the neighborhood? Hard to tell who owns properties you might want to buy or rent. Don't see enough minority-owned businesses. Could there be a tenant fair?
- There needs to be a call to action. Like Enjoy Troy. Need a place where you can look at what may be available to rent and own.
- On the City website there is a listing of businesses. Can there be a listing of minority and woman owned businesses on the City's website?
- Some people are not selling property they own - waiting on gentrification.
- We all need to be urban planners. We need to take charge.
- We need a job corps type center. Train people for a whole variety of trades.
- Story of the young electrician not being able to find a shop location. If young people want to start a business, it should be easy.
- Too many nonprofits. Not enough real jobs.

Housing and Redevelopment

- Seems like there is a lot going on in Troy and Albany but not in Schenectady?
- What could land bank do? Has been focused on Eastern Avenue to have a concentrated impact. City will be able to address other corridors.
- Nepotism and Cronyism – if you are not connected. Grants are available but the same group of organizations get them all the time before the smaller neighborhood groups even hear about them.
- Can community have more control over who is hired to do major projects? Seems like the same people get hired all the time.
- Local sourcing of hiring.
- What would make you live in the neighborhoods? Taxes are too high. Don't buy or stay renters.
- In Schenectady, the taxes are higher, but you can get more house for your money and are able to pay the house off faster.
- Land bank is trying to hire locally even if its more work, costs a little more or takes a little longer.

Youth – Ebony Belmar – Social Worker at Mont Pleasant

- They need a great education to compete. Adults need to advocate for kids. Not getting the quality of education they deserve and can't start businesses to compete.
- People should be able to walk in their own neighborhood.
- Don't tell us what kids are doing. What would you like to see young people doing?

- Hanging out in green space – kids are not going, on social media and inside all the time, need a reason for kids to go outside and socialize
- Mixed age – knowing about senior stories. Take it to the past and take it to the future
- We want them to be comfortable learning new things.
- Need a meeting space. No where outside where you can just go and be comfortable. Nowhere to look around.
- City has grants for Orchard Park and Jerry Burrell Park – so that is coming out and if people want to be part of that they should let the City know.
- Consider space next to Family Dollar
- Outside movies
- Could get businesses to take turns sponsoring a movie.
- Get different age groups to give input.
- Stop littering. Kids do neighborhood clean up and pick up trash. Rake leaves in front of the school. Church group went to Central Park and cleaned up and felt good about it.
- Mary Moore – How to get young people to come to charrette party?
- Kids want to be involved. They want to be asked. They want to be seen. Need to acknowledge that young people's opinions matter.
- Snapchat is how you talk to kids. Set up a hashtag and filter so that kids can send images from the event, Use Facebook and Instagram because you can show where you are and encourage other people to come.



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Meeting Summary of Discussion

INTRODUCTION

- Kristin welcomed people and described the project goals, funding and process to date.
- Participants introduced themselves and included: CDTC, Center For Independence, Boys and Girls Club, Community Builders (three people), Schenectady Community Action Agency, City School District Pleasant Valley Family Liaison, Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association, Community Foundation, Capital Roots, County Engineering, Egan’s Alteration and Local Business Group, Mont Pleasant Branch Library Director, Cope House, Matt Smith, Sylvia Jimison, Proctors, Metroplex/Land Trust, Safe Inc, Creative Community Studios... (some participants joined after the introductions and may not be included in this list)
- Team: Mary Moore Wallinger, Margaret Irwin, Mike Fredericks, Kim Case, Johan Matthews
- City Staff: Kristin Diotte, Matt Smith, Sylvia Jimison, Christine Primiano

PRESENTATION

- Mary Moore Wallinger was primary presenter of the revised PPT
 - Kim discussed complete streets and design approach
 - Mary Moore discussed design parameters
 - Kim discussed project status and approach to existing conditions and technical studies (crash data, levels of service all modes, zoning, etc.) as well as community engagement. Kristin noted that involvement of community members and leaders are critical to this project. Stressed charrette outline.
 - Johan discussed direct community outreach – goal is to identify needs and issues like access, security, engaging residents, engage youth, by survey, website, intercept and longer form survey, curbside conversations, two focus groups... Launch party at Electric City Barn on May 20th, 2019 and three-day charrette.
 - Johan described Mutual Design which collaborates with leaders to engage communities to identify initiatives that can be implemented locally to bring equitable change and create the “happily ever after” people want.
 - Identify ideas to empower the community: Asked people to note ideas on the back of the survey they have at the table

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Art and Culture

- Kristin identified the goal of the art and culture. What role can it play to make better connections? What does arts and culture mean? Where does art and creativity come in in that experience? Especially for youth

- Participation in bench and mural project – Schenectady & Me has the goal of including pieces in all neighborhoods and is looking for partners.
- Community art makes a connection. Give kids disposable cameras, create family crests, put art on boarded up buildings. Seeing what youth value. What is the sentiment in the community? Create spaces that enable that to grow.
- Creating art is a collective experience. Kids in group who don't know each other. By the end when people finish art – people are friends at the end. Proud of their work. Creates relationships. Breaks down barriers.
- People want to see bright colors, flowers and no trash
- Artists are not afraid to do the big step that people are afraid to do. Consider the High Line – people could not have seen. Thriving Neighborhood Challenge get lots of public art ideas. Little, bright spot and hope
- Phoenix Walks project - land across from the Hamilton Hill Arts Center (HHAC) will be sculpture garden representing neighborhood history – there are emotional connections and hope
- Education Program – Proctors - Arts is a dignifying experience and helps them to see that adults are respectful. Mural. Communities where arts are “ineffective” and you see it everywhere - feels more welcoming.
- Need to celebrate the history of experience.
- Open design competitions. Consider mesh that goes on buildings? Maybe on the bridge?
- Arts enriches and enlightens.
- Making it approachable. People feel like they can't do it. Break down bigger projects. Tile project – each person is joined together – take a little bit of everyone.
- Kristin – are there specific spaces of potential: bridge, Community Builders at 734 Stanley Street will include a pocket park. TCB is open to having art installations there. Comonzo dry cleaner and yellow building across the street. Could be place for wayfinding.
- What does better access look like?
 - Craig Street is a blank canvas.
 - Make it softer – less vehicle focused.
 - Bike demo fest had high level of participation. Lots of very little kids. They are “all of our kids”. Right now, sidewalks are so bad you walk looking down rather than around or at people.
 - Maybe garden where kids can pick berries or vegetable. Edible streetscapes?
 - Electric City Barn does jam making.
 - Food insufficiency is an issue. People leave neighborhood to buy groceries. Travel a distance to laundromat.
 - Creative crosswalks like in Troy
 - What could happen in the winter? Snow removal? Issue at the bridge.
 - Food bags at the high school – kids say it's not enough food. School district does weekly bags.
 - “Orchard Park” is not an orchard...
 - Branding, wayfinding, etc... have to live up to message... don't say welcome to “safe corridor” if it's not and people just laugh about. Eastern parkway “award winning island” actually looks awful.
- **Youth Programs** - William Rivas, C.O.C.O.A. House, Save Our Streets
 - Vision to help kids is great. William did all kinds of negative things in the neighborhood and sees value of a different opportunity. Miracle on Crane Street. Kids are pure. Innocent: they will always find a snack, make a friend and create a game – but there are very few places. Outsiders - people who don't look like me don't care about me. Takes time, staying long enough will establish credibility. Treasure Hunt was great. Working with kids helps adults put away prejudices. Were not concerned about safety. Having choices and variety and opportunity of programs.
 - How do we connect use to the environment?

- Had focus group with 150 kids (boys and girls club) – they wanted radio station, game room, theater program. Teen Center – really big
- Kids are looking for their own sense of place. Don't want to be with little kids.
- Young woman whose grandmother was on welfare. Kids are thought to be careful not from hate but from safety. They are scared. Working from love is critical. Kids “walls” are so they can live. It's traumatizing.
- Safe Harbor case manager – human trafficking – in gangs and by parents. Putting kids out for abuse because they need money. Abusers say “I will protect you if you do... for me.” ACES training. KIDS ARE TRAUMATIZED and need ways to deal with that. Every program can't offer the same thing.
- Schenectady Community Foundation Youth Summit. And focus groups - what does community look like? Answer was “love” and “safe places” and jobs for older kids.
- Kids face crisis situations. Flee domestic violence.
- Kids know about all the bad stuff. Safe places. Brave space – space where they can take chances and learn something.
- Bridge and education drive is a cut through? “Dead Man's Path”... Is it safer? Is it shorter? Can some be used for gardens? Growing food?
- Hire kids for summer work on these spaces to be created
- Soul Fire Farm is a back owned farm – they would deliver to the neighborhood – Cheryl from Schenectady Greenmarket is a good partner
- Walking to safe spaces. What if we could give bikes? Look at Troy Bike rescue. Work with bigger businesses to use build a bike as part of human resource.
- Local Leaders are gatekeepers.
- Youth comment – you need to reach out and make it more interesting than our other potions:
- **Business Promotion & Development**
 - The need for access to better foods
 - Corner stores and Family Dollar aren't grocery stores
 - No real access to vegetables, fruits, etc.
 - Food initiatives have to be sustainable
 - Grocery store not sustainable for this area
 - Food trucks, delivery service, pop up grocers, etc. could be more sustainable
 - Need some sort of accountability from potential business or programs, can't come in then pull out a few years later
 - Need to have ways for the community to help build these businesses and take these programs over once they're started
 - Businesses built with and for the community, owned by community members, feel authentic and not like a volunteer gimmick
 - Sustainability, accountability, and authenticity were the key words thrown out during the discussion
 - Make new businesses accessible to all members of the public, i.e. handicap access
 - Do they have benches/places to sit and eat out front?
 - Find the fine line between placemaking and areas to loiter
 - Security cameras are important for everyone
 - Illegal activity isn't hindered by cameras, but it would inhibit younger kids who just want to 'raise hell'
 - Safety is key through means of lighting, lines of sight, cameras, and overall activity on the street
 - Programming events in public spaces throughout the summer was an example of how to combat shootings during those months since the streets were packed with loved ones
 - Need to differentiate youth with adolescents
 - Adolescents roughly 16-24 have so much energy, it's on us to keep them out of the bad sorts of activities
 - Have to give them something to do or they'll find something to do

- **Housing and Redevelopment**

- Multi-modal is key for the corridor to get people from housing to downtown and other areas of the City
- A bike path/lane could get a lot of use based on the turnout if the unaccompanied youth at the bike demo had a place to ride
- Need to ensure affordable housing is included so that redevelopment doesn't push current residents out of the community
- Using multi-purpose path to connect to community plots and spaces make for a good pairing
- Lack of housing for larger families (3+ bedrooms), lots of families with 6-8 kids
- More education for landlords in preparing them for renting to families with children (high eviction rates for these populations)
- Need more community policing/positive police engagement – would be good for police to let community know why they are doing so much checking and ground the activity in the notion of working with the neighborhood

REPORT BACK

Arts and culture

- Opportunities for community space
- Unconscious vulnerability in creating art is creating relationships – especially public space
- Dignity in the making of art
- Making art approachable
- Locations: Stanley and Craig Pocket Park, edible streetscape, reclaiming space
- Food is essential – how to bring food to people. How do you promote the businesses that do offer fresh food?
- Food truck
- Kids /people walking dogs
- Security cameras

Housing and Development

- Multi modal transportation
- Bike paths/bike lanes based on bike rodeo there is a lot of participation
- Multi use paths connect spaces
- Lack of housing for larger families
- Education landlords about renting to families
- Affordable housing that does not gentrify
- Community engagement
- Increasing signage helps build awareness of assets

Youth Programs

- Using current great programs
- Involving youth in the conversation – in planning and implementation phase too, not just issue identification
- Trauma kids face
- Safe places/spaces

WRAP UP

Ideas for getting people to launch party.

- Make magnets – and affix to the wall – things that take individual contributions to the overall group

- Blank Canvas
- Community Garden – Could we put banner on fence?
- Identify intersections to do creative crosswalks